

Expanding Your Editorial Tool Kit: Image Research

I. What is Image (or Art) Research?

Art researchers locate, obtain, and negotiate rights to all sorts of images for use in books, magazines, and on web sites. If you enjoy research, have good Internet search skills, enjoy art, and have a great deal of patience, you've got what it takes to be an art researcher.

II. Where to Find Those Elusive Photos

General sources

Picturehouse (www.picturehouse.org)--A listing of most of the photo and art archives available on the internet, including each archive's specializations.

Corbis (www.corbis.com)--One of the three major photo sites (the others are Getty/TimeLife at www.gettyimages.com and AP Photo at www.apimages.com); good for photographs of all sorts, especially current news and happenings. Getty/TimeLife is better for historical images.

Veer (www.veer.com)--A wonderful source for stock art, as well as interesting fonts (terrific if you're a designer) for reasonable prices.

Fine Art

Art Resource (www.artres.com)--Art Resource has images from many, many museums across the world, and their search engine is one of the best I've found. Their real person help is also wonderful--if you've searched their site and can't find what you want, they'll look in what they *don't* have on the website and see if it's there.

The Art Archive (www.picture-desk.com)--Another good fine art site, with helpful people who will answer your emails and phone calls if you're stymied.

Topic-specific Archives

The Kobal Collection (www.picture-desk.com)--This archive specializes in movie and television images--extremely helpful, and you don't have to argue with the production houses, since they've done it for you!

New York Public Library Digital Gallery (digitalgallery.nypl.org)--The NYPL has put a great many of the illustrations of its myriad books online here, and they can be yours (or your client's) for a very small fee. Wonderful if you're looking for old illustrations.

The Library of Congress Photo and Prints Division (www.loc.gov/rr/print/) -- A good resource for old photos and prints, and a *huge* catalog. Many of the images are available for direct download, but those that aren't are available for a small fee.

III. A Few Useful Tips

Always have alternatives for your photos. It doesn't take that much longer to grab both images of a particular piece of artwork or both photographs of an event or person, and that way you have backups if the client doesn't like your first choice, and don't have to spend the additional time at the end of the project looking for new images.

Get your rights information up front from the client. Some photo and art houses won't license images for specific countries, or only for a particular print run. If you know what the client is looking for ahead of time, that saves time in the negotiation process.

Google is your friend. Obscure and unusual photos can sometimes be found simply by using Google Image Search (images.google.com), and then contacting the website owner, who will likely be able to tell you the image's source.

Have a cutoff time for each image. Set yourself a time limit for searching for each individual image--mine is about ½ hour. If you find yourself at that limit, stop and go on to the next one, or you'll quickly find yourself out of time, out of patience, and out of the hourly limit on your contract.

Always make sure the rights are in the client's name and not yours. That way, if there are any problems with permissions/rights/usage, it will be the client's responsibility to solve them, not yours.

Most of all--enjoy what you're doing! Find a publisher that works with illustrated books you're interested in, whether that's cookbooks, illustrated encyclopedias, coffee-table art books---the more interested you are in the subject you're researching, the happier you'll be!